

UNBELIEVERS STUMBLING; BELIEVERS REJOICING NO. 571

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 22, 1864,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense:
and whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed.”
Romans 9:33.*

OUR apostle was inspired of God, and yet he was moved to quote passages out of the Old Testament. The Spirit of God might have dictated new words to him, might have shown him how to confirm the truth by other arguments, but He is not pleased so to do. He moves His servant to establish the present truth by truths formerly revealed, and thus He sets us an example of searching the Scriptures and prizing the ancient oracles of God. The passage before us appears to be composed of two Scriptures woven into one, a method not very infrequent with the apostles. A part of the text before us is found in Isaiah 28:16, the apostle does not quote verbatim, but gives us rather the sense than the words, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste.”

But the apostle inlays this word of prophecy with another, selecting this time from Isaiah 8:14, “And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel.” I cannot help making an observation or two upon these passages before I come to the text before us. In Isaiah 8:14, you will perceive a striking proof of Christ’s divinity. Observe the thirteenth verse, “Sanctify the *LORD* of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he,” that is the Lord of hosts, “shall be for a sanctuary;” to believers, “but a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel.” Isaiah utters a prophecy of the Lord of hosts, Paul quotes it in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, plainly intending us to infer that the Lord Jesus Christ is no other than JEHOVAH Himself.

We learn from the other passage another truth, which serves more closely to illustrate our text. In Isaiah 28:16, we read, “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone.” The apostle has omitted the words “for a foundation,” and has inserted the words of the other passage, “a stumbling stone, a rock of offense.” But the original prophecy in Isaiah serves to show us that God’s real objective in laying Christ in Zion was not that men might stumble at Him, but that He might be a foundation for their hopes. The real objective of God was that Christ might be the cornerstone of human confidence, but the result has been, that to one set of men, renewed by almighty grace, Christ has become a sanctuary of refuge and a stone of dependence, and to others left to their own depravity He has become a rock of offense and a stumbling stone. These remarks upon the primitive Scriptures which Paul quotes, and now let us come to the verse itself.

Our text tells us that *many persons stumble at Christ*, and then, secondly, it assures us that *those who receive Christ and believe in Him, shall have no cause to be ashamed*.

I. The first declaration needs no proof, for observation itself teaches us that MANY STUMBLE AT CHRIST.

No sooner was God manifest in the flesh, than mortals began to stumble at Him. “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” was the question of those who looked for worldly pomp and imperial grandeur. “His father and his mother, we know, and his brethren and his sisters are they not all with us?” was the whispered objection of His own townsmen. In His own country, the greatest of all prophets had no honor. Our Lord was rejected of all sorts of men, they looked at Him from different quarters, but all with

the same scornful eye. The Pharisee stumbled at Him because He was not superstitious and ostentatious, indeed, He did not wash His hands before He ate, nor did He pray at the corner of the streets, He entered into the company of publicans and sinners, He did not make broad His phylactery, He healed the sick upon the Sabbath, He had no respect for traditions, and therefore every righteous Pharisee abhorred Him.

The Sadducee, on the other hand, much as He hated Pharisaic superstition, despised Christ equally as much. His objections were shot from quite another quarter. To him Christ was too superstitious, for the Sadducee would not believe in angel or spirit, or the resurrection of the dead—all which beliefs the prophet of Nazareth openly avowed. Philosophical skepticism detested Jesus because His teaching had in it very much of the supernatural element. All His life long, in the high courts of Herod or of Pilate, or in the lowest rank of the mob of Judea, Christ was despised and rejected of men. They had long ago persecuted all the prophets whom the Lord had sent, and it was little marvel that they now assailed the Master Himself. “We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not lamented,” might all the prophets of God say, for Israel received neither the lonely man, whose meat was locusts and wild honey, nor the more genial spirit who came eating and drinking. They put all God’s prophets away, and would have none of their rebukes, and when the Son Himself had come, they said, “This is the heir, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.” The Jews, with one voice rejected Him, save only the remnant, according to the election of grace.

But the Jew is not alone in his offense at the cross. We know that when the gospel was carried afterwards to the Gentiles, Christ crucified was a stumbling stone to them. The polished Greeks, with their various systems of philosophy, expected in the Messiah deep thinking, and classic taste, but when they heard Paul preach the resurrection of the dead, they saw nothing flattering to their philosophy, and therefore they openly mocked thereat. While the Jew gathered up his broad-bordered garment and called Christ a stumbling block, the Greek marched off to his classic temple or to his scientific academe, and cried, “Foolishness! The men who talk thus must be mad.” In every age, even to the present time, wherever Jesus Christ is preached, the human heart at once has been stirred with wrath against Him, God’s ambassador has found men unwilling to receive the peace which he proclaims, God’s dear Son, who came with no words but those of mercy and of tenderness, has been abhorred and rejected by the very men whom He came to bless. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

However, we have very little to do with these past ages, we have far more to do with the present and with ourselves, and it is a sad thing to know that among this assembly, though I suppose we all call ourselves Christians, there are many who still find Christ Jesus to be a stumbling stone to them and a rock of offense. It is a lamentable fact that there are hundreds of thousands in London to whom the Gospel of Christ is as little known as to Hindus or Tartars. Christ is not a stumbling block to these, they are unaware of Him and therefore they have not the guilt which some of you have, of having heard of Him and having rejected Him.

Among the present assembly there are some who stumble at Christ because of *His holiness*. He is too strict for them, they would be Christians, but they cannot renounce their sensual pleasures, they would be washed in His blood, but they desire still to roll in the mire of sin. Willing enough the mass of men would be to receive Christ, if, after receiving Him, they might continue in their drunkenness, their wantonness, and self-indulgence, but Christ lays the axe at the root of the tree, He tells them that these things must be given up, for “Because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,” and “Without holiness no man can see the Lord.”

Human nature kicks at this. “What! may I not enjoy one darling lust? May I not indulge myself at least now and then in these things? Must I altogether forsake my old habits and my old ways? Must I be made a new creature in Christ Jesus?” These are terms too hard, conditions too severe, and so, the human heart goes back to the flesh pots of Egypt, and clings to the garlic and the onions of the old estate of bondage, and will not be set free even though a greater than Moses lifts up the rod to part the sea, and

promises to give to them a Canaan flowing with milk and honey. Christ offends men because His Gospel is intolerant of sin.

Others stumble at our blessed Lord because they do not like *the plan of being saved altogether and alone through faith*. Have I any such here? I suppose I have. They say, “What, are our good works to go for nothing? Is there nothing that we can do to assist in our salvation? You tell us that it is trusting in Christ alone without anything else which justifies the soul, then we do not understand it, or if we understand it we do not like it.” This is too humbling, too simple, too easy.

“Why,” says the man who has always been to his parish church or to his meeting house, who owes nobody anything, and is kind to the poor—“Why! then I am no better off than the harlot who walks the pavement at midnight, the thief who is spending his month at the treadmill.” You are no better off, my hearer, as to your eternal salvation, if you refuse to believe in Christ. The damnation of the openly ungodly is sure, but so is yours if after having heard the plan of salvation you turn upon your heel and despise it because you prefer your own righteousness to the righteousness of God. Ah! how many are shipwrecked upon this rock, swallowed up in this quicksand, they would be saved but they will not bow the knee, they are not content to take God’s salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and so they perish through their willful pride.

I have known others who stumble at Christ, because of *the doctrine which He preaches*, more especially *the doctrines of grace*. There will come into this house some, who, if we preach a sermon upon Christian virtue, will say, “I enjoyed that discourse,” but if we preach Christ, and begin to talk about the deep doctrines which lie underneath the Gospel, such as election, effectual calling, and eternal and immutable love, straightway they are angry almost to the gnashing of their teeth, they would have Christ, they say, but they cannot accept these doctrines. “What! God saves whom He wills, and not so much as ask the creature’s leave! Shall He do just as He pleases with us as a potter does with lumps of clay? Are we to be told to our face that it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy? We cannot endure this—we will betake ourselves to some place where man is made more of, and where God is not set so high above our heads.”

Ah! but my friend, Jesus Christ will not shape His doctrine to please you, nor tone down the truth of Scripture to suit your carnal taste. Mark you, it is in the ninth of Romans that my text is found, and in that ninth of Romans you have the most plain and bold declaration anywhere on record concerning the sovereignty of divine grace, and if you choose to make that sovereignty a reason for not believing in Christ, you will perish for your pains, and perish deservedly too, because you will quarrel with God’s Word, and damn your own soul to be avenged on God’s sovereignty.

But indeed, my dear friends, when sinners are resolved to object to Christ, it is the easiest thing in the world to find something to object to. I have met with some who stumble at *Christ’s people*. They will say, “Well, I would believe in Christ, but look at professors, see how inconsistent they are. See many church members, in what an unholy way they walk, and even some ministers,” and then they will begin to quote various faults of some of God’s eminent servants, and they think this is an excuse for going to hell themselves, because others do not walk straight in the way to heaven.

Oh, will you send your soul to hell because another man is not all he should be? What if David falls and David is restored, is this any reason why you should fall and never be restored? What if some pilgrims to heaven do turn into By-path meadow, and have to come limping back into the road, is this a reason why you should follow the road to the City of Destruction? I think, man, that this should only make you the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, the shipwrecks of others should make you sail more carefully, the bankruptcies of other men should make you trade with greater diligence and humility, but to quote the defects of others as a reason why you should continue in the error of your ways is a fool’s method of reasoning, take heed, lest you find out your folly in the flames of hell.

The real objection of the natural man is not, however, to God’s people, nor to the plan of salvation itself, so much as to Christ. The rock of offense is Christ—to *the person of Christ*. You will not have

this man to reign over you, you are not willing that He should wear the crown, and have all the honor of your salvation, you had rather perish in your sin, than that Jesus Christ should be magnified in your salvation. This is a severe charge, you will tell me, if it is not true, I pray you prove it false by believing in Jesus. If you have no objection to Christ, accept Him. Sinner, I charge you, if you say I do not stumble at Christ, then lay hold upon Him, if He be not obnoxious to you, clasp Him in your arms now. Why, man, if you are in your senses, since Christ can save you with an eternal salvation, you will certainly grasp Him, unless there be some objection in the way, and because you do not lay hold of Him, I tell you there is some hindrance in your sinful heart, an offense at Christ, which will be your ruin unless God delivers you from it.

Now, may God help me to reason a few minutes with those who are not believers in Christ, who have made Him a stumbling stone, and a rock of offense. Dear friend, let me come close to you and take your hand, and talk with you. *Have you ever considered how much you insult God the Father, by rejecting Christ?* If you were invited to a man's feast and you should come to the table and dash down every dish, and throw them on the ground, and trample on them, would not this be an insult? If you were a poor beggar at the door, and a rich man had bidden you into his feast out of pure charity, what do you think you would deserve if you had treated his provisions in this way? And yet this is just your case. You have no deservings of God, you are a poor sinner without any claim upon Him, and yet He has been pleased to prepare a table, His oxen and His fatlings have been killed, and now you will not come, nay, you do worse, you raise objections to the feast, you despise the pleasant land and the goodly provision of God.

Just think you at what an expense the provision of salvation has been made. The eternal Father gave His Son. Hark you! His well-beloved, the darling of His heart, His only Son—He gave Him to die, and do you despise such a gift as this? What think you, would it not bring the blood into your face if you should give your only son to fight for your country, and they to whom he was given should despise you and your gift? If out of some superhuman patriotism for your country's good you should even slay your son, would it not cut you to the quick if men should laugh at you and scoff the deed? And yet such you do to the eternal Father, who for the love of men has rent His darling from His bosom, nailed Him to the tree, and filled Him with pains unutterable. You despise the unspeakable gift, the richest deed of bounty which even the infinite heart of God could have imagined, or the infinite hand of God could have performed. You do despise all this, you touch God, let me tell you, in the apple of His eye, you have now wound Him in the tenderest part, you might better have run upon the edge of His sword or dashed yourself upon the bosses of His buckler than to despise and reject His only-begotten Son, slaughtered for human guilt.

Think you again, *what a proof is here of your sinfulness*, and how readily will you be condemned at the last when this sin is written on your forehead. Why, man, there will be no reason to bring up any other sins against you, the book in which your faults have been recorded scarce needs be opened, for this alone will be enough. You have made Christ a stumbling block, you have objected to God's dear Son, why need we any other witness? Out of this one mouth, you shall be condemned, "You did abhor the Prince of glory, you did refuse Him your heart," take him back to the place from where he came. What if he has never been an adulterer or a whoremonger, yet is not this enough? Does not this show the blackness of the traitor's heart, and the vileness of his character?—he would not have Christ, but he made the foundation which God laid in Sion, "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." What do you think of this, my hearer?

Moreover, as this will be a swift witness to condemn you, *how will this increase your misery?* Do you think God will be tender over you when you have not been tender with His Son? When He shall cast you into hell, will He make the flames less hot? Do you think His vengeance will be cool towards the man who stumbled at His Son? Nay, but this shall whet the edge of His sword. "This traitor did do despite unto the blood of Christ." This will pour oil upon the flames. "This man made My only-begotten Son to be a stumbling stone, and now will I prove to him that whosoever stumbles upon this stone shall

be broken, and upon whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder." Do you think that a king would be any the more inclined to be merciful towards a traitor if he knew that that traitor had despised his son? Nay, but I think the sentence would be the more severe.

Ah, sinner! if all other sinners escape, you who have heard the Gospel, you shall not, if God's arrows miss other sinners, they shall strike you, you shall be the special object of almighty vengeance because you were disobedient, stumbling at this stumbling stone. Think again, man, *will not this seal the eternity of your woe?* How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation? You have broken down the only bridge which could have led you into safety, you have pulled down the only refuge which could have protected you from divine wrath—"There remains no more sacrifice for sin"—how can there be? Do you think when you are in hell, that Christ will come a second time to die for you? Will He pour out His blood again to bring you from the place of torment? Man, do you have so vain an imagination as to dream that there will be a second ransom offered for those who have not escaped the wrath to come, and that God the Holy Ghost will again come and strive with sinners who before willfully rejected Him? Nay, inasmuch as even your Savior is objected to, and you put eternal life from you, and the foundation itself is a stumbling stone, there can remain nothing for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.

And now one other word with you. Does not this view of the case make your heart tremble? Is it not enough to have broken God's law? Why have you gone the length of despising His Son? Oh my eyes! if you could weep forever you could never weep tears enough, because once you refused to look to Him who is now your daily joy. Is not this one of the worst sins we shall have to confess? and O sinner, will not you confess it now? Will not this thought break your heart, that you have hitherto despised the altogether lovely and loving One? May the Spirit of God drive that home as a nail in a sure place, and I think you will turn to the Redeemer and say, "My Lord and my God, forgive me that I have dealt so unkindly with You, accept me, receive me to Your bosom, wash me in Your blood, take me to be Your servant, and save me with a great salvation." Happy is the man who has been brought by divine grace thus to confess his fault, and stumble no longer. After all, what is there to stumble at?

O my hearer, why should you reject Christ? He is not a hard taskmaster—"His yoke is easy, and His burden is light." Why should you refuse your own mercy? To be saved—is that a misfortune? To be cleansed from sin—is this a calamity? To be made a child of God—is that a disadvantage? To escape from hell and fly to heaven—is not this the most desirable of all mercies? Wherefore, then, despise Christ? It is unreasonable. God deliver you from this unreasonable sin, and bring you now to accept Christ with a perfect heart, and He shall be praised for it forever.

II. I shall now try, by the help of God's Spirit, to explain the second part—the more comforting part of the text, "**WHOSOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM, SHALL NOT BE ASHAMED.**"

He shall be ashamed to think he did not believe before, he shall be ashamed to think he does not believe more firmly now, he shall often feel shame and confusion of face on account of his ingratitude, and his sinfulness, and his wandering of heart, but the text means he shall not be ashamed of having trusted Christ. He that believes on Christ shall never have any cause to be ashamed of so doing.

1. In handling this, I shall first of all notice *when those who trust Christ might be ashamed of having trusted Him.* Well might they be ashamed *if Christ should ever leave them.* If it should ever come to this, that He, who is the husband of my heart, should desert me and leave me a lone widow in the world, if, after having said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," He should after all take Himself away, and never indulge His servant with one smile from His face, I should then indeed have reason to be ashamed of having put my trust in such a fickle Savior.

The Arminian's christ is one whom they have good reason to be ashamed of, because he redeems men with his precious blood, and yet they go to hell. The Arminian's christ loves today but hates tomorrow, he saves by grace, but that grace is dependent upon man's use of grace, he does bring men out of a state of condemnation, and he does justify them, but, after all, he lets them go back into a state of condemnation, and they perish after all. But the Christian's Christ is a very different person, whom

once He loves He never leaves, but loves them to the end, where He has begun a good work He carries it on and perfects it. The Christian's Christ can say, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Until the Christian finds that the grace of God is clean gone, that Christ's love has ceased, he shall never have any cause to be ashamed.

Again, the Christian would have cause to doubt if *Christ were to fail* him, either as to providence or grace, *in his times of trial and temptation*. When in the midst of the rivers, if the Lord does not sustain me, I shall have cause to blush for my hope. If, walking through the fires the flames do kindle upon me, and I do not find the Lord to be my present help in time of trouble, then I am put to shame. O beloved, when will this happen? In six troubles He has been with you, and in seven no evil has touched you. You have been brought very low, you could not have been much lower unless you had been in your grave, you have been very poor, scarcely having bread to eat, or raiment to put on, everything in which you trusted has been cut from under you, you are left orphans in the world, with the exception of your Father which is in heaven, but still, for all that, has not your bread been given you? have not your waters been sure? and today, must not your testimony be concerning God today that He has been a friend who sticks closer than a brother? Well, then, you never need be ashamed, because there never shall come a time when He shall leave you to perish through stress of trials, or allow you to be destroyed by the force of temptations.

Again, a Christian would have cause to be ashamed if *Christ's promises were not fulfilled*. They are very rich and very full, and there are very many of them, and if I take these promises and act upon God's Word, and then, after all, find the promise to be mere waste paper, if the Lord breaks His own oath, why then I should be ashamed to have believed in an unfaithful God. But when will that be? Christian, has the time come with you yet? You have had promises applied with power to your heart, and you have taken them to God in prayer. Let me appeal to your experience. Have they not been fulfilled beyond your expectation or your faith? Has not God done for you exceeding above what you can ask or think? And yet this morning, perhaps, you are afraid His promise will not be kept, you have come here in lowness of spirit, you have had so many troubles during the week that you really begin to be ashamed of having trusted in God. Be ashamed of yourself for being ashamed, but depend on it, your confidence is not a thing to blush over.

But O my brethren, how ashamed would the Christian be, if *when he came to die*, he should find no support, no kind angels near his bed, no Savior to bear his head up amidst the billows! But have you ever heard of a Christian who was ashamed in his dying hour? Is it not rather the sure witness of all the departed that their last moments have been gilded with the sunlight of heaven? Have not they sung on their dying beds, with David, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me"? If, indeed, we could wake up in the resurrection and find ourselves without a Savior, if we could stand at the judgment bar of God and find that Christ's blood had not made us clean, if after all our faith in Him we should hear Him say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire," then might we be ashamed. But our text assures us that we never shall have to suffer this. Let us then roll ourselves upon this sweet comfort, having believed in Christ we shall never in this life, nor in the life to come, need to be ashamed of our hope.

2. Having noticed *when* the Christian might be ashamed, let us notice *why he might be ashamed if such things were to come*. I have sometimes thought, dear friends, that in some respects, if the Bible were proved to be false, I should never be ashamed of having believed it, if there should be no Savior, I think that when I stand before God's throne I shall not be ashamed of having believed the Gospel because, I think, I could dare to say even to the eternal God, "Great God, I believed of You that which reflected the highest honor upon Your character, I believed You capable of a great deed of kindness, the giving of Your own Son, I believed You to be so just that You would not forgive without a punishment, and yet so gracious that You would sooner give Your Son than not have mercy upon men, I believed of You higher things than either Jew, or Muslim, or heathen, and my soul did love You for it, I preached what I thought would honor Your name, and now that it turns out to be a mistake, I am not ashamed of

having believed it, for it was such a thing as should have been true, Your nature and Your character made it likely to be true, and I mourn to think it is not, but I am not ashamed. I wish it had been, it would make You, Great God, even more glorious than You are."

Beloved, we are under no apprehension that it shall turn out to be so, for we know whom we have believed, and we are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him. Why would a Christian be ashamed if the Gospel were untrue? We should be ashamed, first of all, because we have ventured our all upon its truth. *We have ventured our all upon Christ.* The world says you should never put all your eggs in one basket, and when a man speculates in some one thing, and it all comes down, wise people hold up their hands and say, "Ah! very imprudent, very imprudent, better have three or four strings to your bow, you must not be depending on any one thing." The world is quite right in human things. But here are we, we are depending everything upon one man, my soul has not a shadow of a hope anywhere else but in Christ, and I know that your spirits have not even the ghost of a shadow of dependence anywhere but in the blood and righteousness of that divine Redeemer, who has completed our salvation, and ascended up on high. If He can fail us, then all our hopes are gone, we are, of all men most miserable if our hope should turn out to be a delusion, we would be foolish indeed, and have reason to be ashamed of our hope.

We should be ashamed, again, because *we have given up this life for the next*, believing in the world to come, we have said, "This is not our rest, we have no abiding city here." The world's proverb is, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," but we, on the other hand, have said that the bird in the hand is nothing at all, that the bird in the bush is everything. Our soul says, "Joy! we do not expect it here, it is *there* that joy is to be found." "Wealth! no man is rich on earth, riches are in heaven, the true treasure is in glory." "Love! does not find a fit object here, our affection is set upon things above, where Christ dwells at the right hand of God." Now, if things should turn out wrong, and we have believed in vain, then we shall be ashamed of our hope, but not till then, not till then, beloved, and that shall be never. We know whom we have believed, and we are confident that in giving up this earth, we have only given up a handful of ashes that we may enjoy riches and glory forever.

Again, if Christ should fail us, we should be ashamed because *we began boasting before we had ended the battle.* "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." I hope you can say, dear friends, that though you have not entered heaven, and have not yet seen Christ face to face, yet you have learned to glory in the cross of Christ, and no man has been able to stop you in your glory. You have boasted in Christ, you have said that He is a sure foundation, that He is a precious husband, that He is all in all to you and worthy of your best love, but if He should fail you, why then you would be in the position of a man who boasted before the time. But we shall never be ashamed, we do right to boast with a full mouth. Let us glory in the Lord, but oh! if He should fail us—which He never can—then were we ashamed indeed.

Besides, we have done more than boast, you and I have actually *divided the spoil*, and oh! if the battle should be lost, then we should be ashamed. We are told that in one of the great battles on the continent in the olden times, the French, before the battle began, commenced selling the English captives to one another, and calculated how much each man would have of the spoil, but then, fortunately, they never gained the victory. But you and I have already entered into our rest, we have had the earnest of our inheritance, we have begun even on earth to eat the clusters of Eshcol, and if it should be a delusion we should be ashamed, but not till then. Courage, dear friends! we may go boldly on, dividing the spoil still, for while Christ is true and God is faithful, there shall be no reason for being ashamed.

I have known some ashamed when they have made a bad speculation, because *they have induced others to enter into it*, they have been more ashamed to face their friends who have lost money, than they have been to acknowledge that they lost themselves. You and I have been inducing others to embark in this great venture, we have taught others to believe in Christ, and some of us scarcely spend a

day without winning some souls to confidence in Christ. Oh, sweet assurance, we have not preached cunningly devised fables, and shall never be ashamed.

3. I must crave your patience just a moment while I now pass on to notice, *who are they who shall never be ashamed?* The answer is general and special. The text says, “*Whosoever believes*”—that is, any man or woman who ever lived, or ever shall live, who believes in Christ, shall never be ashamed. Whether he has been a gross sinner or a moralist, whether he is learned or illiterate, whether he be a prince or a beggar, it matters not—“*Whosoever believes in Christ, shall never be ashamed.*” You, man, over yonder, though you may very seldom come to the house of God, yet if you believe in Christ today you shall never be ashamed of Him. You who have sat in God’s house for years, and feel yourselves guilty of having rejected Christ, yet if now you trust Him you shall not be ashamed.

But there is a specialty, it is “*Whosoever believes.*” Others shall be ashamed. There must be a real and hearty believing, there must be a simple confidence in the person and work of Jesus, wherever this is there shall be no shame. “Ah!” says one, “but I have such a little faith, I am afraid I shall be confounded.” No, you come in under the “*Whosoever*”—“*Whosoever believes,*” though his faith be never so little, shall never be ashamed. “Ah!” says another, “but I have so many doubts.” Still, dear heart, since you believe you shall not be ashamed, all your doubtings and your fearings shall never damn you, for your faith will prevail. “Oh! but,” says another, “my corruption is so strong, I have come this morning lamenting because of my imperfections, they have obtained the mastery of my faith, and I have fallen during the week.”

Yes, soul, all fallen as you are, yet if you believe you shall never be ashamed. Does sin stare you in the face? Do you feel very heavy under a sense of your own unworthiness? Dare to believe in Christ just as you are, sins and all, venture on Him without any other confidence. When frames are dark and graces dead, when evidences are black, when everything gives you a frown and a curse, yet dare to believe in Him, now take Him to be your friend when you have no other, now flee to this refuge when every other door is shut, now that winter has frozen every brook, now come and drink of this brook which flows on forever, this well of Bethlehem which is within the gate can never fail you, and you need not to put your life in jeopardy to get it, it is free to you this moment, stoop and drink confidently, stoop and drink, and you shall thirst no more, for “*Whosoever believes in Him shall never be ashamed.*”

4. To conclude, the text means more than it says, for whereas it says they shall not be ashamed, it means that they shall be glorified and full of honor. If you trust Christ today, it will bring you shame from men, it will assure you trials and troubles, but it will also assure you honor in the sight of God’s holy angels, and glory at the last in the sight of the assembled universe. Where is the man who trusts Christ today? There he stands in the pillory, and men say, “Aha! Aha! The fool! The fool! The fool! He trusts a God whom he cannot see, he believes in a Christ whom we have heard of, but whom we never heard, he trusts in the blood of a crucified Galilean.” The worldling cries, “We are too wise for that, we will believe geological theories, spiritualism, or metaphysics, we will believe the devil himself sooner than we will believe in Christ!” So they scoff at the man who trusts Christ.

The scene is changed, the generation of the living has passed away, and the world has become one great burial field. There they lay, innumerable hillocks mark where the bodies of men are sleeping. The trumpet sounds, it rings clear through earth and heaven, and up from the graves rise bodies which have once been worm’s meat, and souls come back into those frames, and now where is the man who trusted Christ? The trumpet has startled them all from their tombs and they awake together—“Where is the man who trusted in Christ?” Who is it that inquires for him? The King Himself upon the throne has asked the question, King Jesus, sitting on His judgment seat, searches for His friends—“Where is the man who trusted in Me? Bring him here.”

See the change, no hootings and yellings, and laughter, and slander now, a triumphant squadron of bright spirits carry up the believer to the right hand of Jesus, and there he sits enthroned like Christ, sitting with Him to judge men and angels, reigning upon Christ’s throne in all Christ’s splendor, “Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delights to honor,” thus shall it be done to the man who

puts his trust in Christ. Come, Christian, whatever may be your state today, however the world's mockery may ring in your ears, think of that unwilling honor which the crowd of sinners will have to give you at the last great day! Think of how your fame and reputation shall rise with your bones! and as worms cannot devour your body to prevent your rising, so shall not slander and rebuke devour your character to prevent its rising too. Glory shall be yours, everlasting glory, while your enemies shall be clothed with shame and eternal contempt.

Well, what say you, dear hearers, on which side are you this morning? Is Christ a stumbling block to you? Will you go on stumbling at Him and objecting to Him? Do you say rather, "Nay, we will have Christ, and trust Him." Oh! if the Lord has brought you to this, I will clap my hands for joy, and you, you angels, strike your harps, you seraphs, tune your lyres anew, for there is joy in heaven as there is joy on earth when a soul comes to put its trust in Christ.

The Lord bring every one of us, for His name's sake.

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